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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000238

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TAGS: PREL ECON EFIN SO KE QA

SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE BUDGET SUPPORT FOR SOMALIA'S TFG --
AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SOMALI FOREIGN MINISTER OMAAR
APRIL 1

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Key Points

-- FM Omaar told Ambassador April 1 that the TFG has withdrawn its budgetary support request for \$36 million from the Arab League, because one or more Arab League member states attached an unacceptable condition to that support: that the TFG reconcile with the Somali opposition.

-- FM Omaar believes this conditional Arab League position on financial support to be, in fact, the position of just Qatar.

-- The TFG has told the Qataris (privately) that such conditionality just empowers the opposition. The FM said the TFG has withdrawn its request for financial help from the Arab League.

-- That said, the Foreign Minister said the Arab League's political and diplomatic support at the Summit was "firm and clear." And publicly, the TFG has been resolutely positive and optimistic about the Arab League and its support for the TFG.

Comments

-- With the Summit, Qatar now holds the presidency of the Arab League. It is possible that Qatar was not acting unilaterally but in its capacity as AL president after consultations with other members states.

-- But Embassy Doha does not know whether the mechanics of the Arab League permit such unilateral action. Presumably, the new Somali TFG does know the mechanics, and it clearly believes Qatar acted alone.

-- The budgetary support sought by the TFG from the Arab League is far from trivial for the TFG. The TFG asked for a \$36 million contribution, \$6 million for 6 months, to the TFG's \$40 million budget.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (C) Ambassador met at the request of the Somalia Unit of Embassy Nairobi with Foreign Minister Omaar on April 1 on the margins of the Arab League Summit in Doha.

¶2. (C) FM Omaar said the Arab League's political and diplomatic support at the Summit was "firm and clear." But one or more Arab League member states are conditioning AL aid -- \$3 million for 12 months -- on the TFG's reconciling with "the (unspecified) opposition," he said.

¶13. (C) FM Omaar believes this Arab League position on financial support to be, in fact, the position of just Qatar, current AL president. The financing issue was not discussed in ordinary session, so the TFG can't be sure who supports what at the head of state level. But the Somalis are convinced it's just Qatar.

¶14. (C) According to FM Omaar, when time ran out at the ordinary session, Qatar's Prime Minister, Hamid bin Jassim, said Qatar would take responsibility for the TFG budgetary support issue, discuss it with other Heads of State, and get back to the TFG. (Some much time was taken up in ordinary session with Palestinian issues and Sudan that the third agenda item, Somalia, was not reached.)

¶15. (C) Meanwhile, the TFG has told the Qataris (privately) that such conditionality just empowers the opposition. The FM said the TFG has withdrawn its request for financial help from the Arab League. Publicly, however, the TFG has been resolutely positive and optimistic about the Arab League.

¶16. (C) The Foreign Minister said that Qatar did not push the TFG to negotiate or reconcile with specific individuals or groups. The Somalis tried to get specificity, Omaar said. In response, Qatar said, in effect, reach out to everyone, and "he who is willing to come to you to discuss reconciliation, talk to him." The Somalis think the Qataris might have in mind the Islamic Party, but "we also think the Qataris don't really understand the situation or the specific groups involved." Cooperation with Eritrea, especially through Hassan Dahir Aweys, was not specifically part of the conditionality. But FM Omaar believes that Eritrea has

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lobbied Qatar successfully.

¶17. (C) Foreign Minister Omaar did not know whether Presidents Bashir and Qadhafi were cooperating or competing in the AL's position on Somalia. But he said that Iraq was prepared to provide \$5 million without conditions. The Kuwaiti Amir called the decision on conditionality "a poor response," according to the FM. But he, Kuwait's Amir, was "too polite" to make an issue of it, Omaar said. Syria is ready to provide training for TFG security forces and to provide uniforms. The UAE is very promising as a donor source, FM Omaar believes. He hopes the USG will follow up with the UAE FM, who is going to be in Washington April 5th.

LeBaron